

Desertification in the Mediterranean Region: A Security Issue

NATO Science and Society Newsletter, September 2003, No. 64
(www.nato.int/science/newsletter/2003/64-en.pdf)

A significant NATO workshop, sponsored jointly by the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS) and the Science Committee, will take place in Valencia, Spain from 2-5 December 2003, dealing with desertification in the Mediterranean Region. The problem of desertification is of pressing interest to countries of the Mediterranean Region, as for many other areas of the world. Desertification is defined by the United Nations Environment Programme as land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas of the world resulting from a combination of factors including climatic variations and human activities.

In line with NATO's strategic objectives, both the CCMS and the Science Committee are addressing the impact of environmental degradation on peace, stability, and security by examining the issue of desertification. The main objective of this workshop will be to combine a scientific understanding of desertification on a large scale, i.e., at regional and national levels with societal and economic responses. Researchers, scientists, land managers, policy makers, government and non-government representatives, experts in desertification issues, will attend. The workshop is being organized jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the University of Valencia, Spain, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the U.S. Desert Research Institute, as well as the NATO Science and CCMS secretariat.

The workshop will provide the opportunity to apply new technologies and to integrate both natural and social sciences within a framework of mutual international cooperation. Among the themes to be examined are: consequences of degradation on social, economic and political issues, especially in relation to food security and migrations; land use and human demographic change; forecasting techniques, early warning systems and alternative future analysis; regional cooperation, and information-sharing mechanisms.

One objective will be to establish an expert working group following the workshop to develop further the issues raised. It will be composed of NATO Member, Partner and Mediterranean Dialogue nations. The EPA website (<http://www.epa.gov/nerlesd1/land-sci/desert/index.htm>) provides further information on the workshop (also see www.nato.int/ccms and www.nato.int/science).

The organizing institutions include:

NATO Science Committee and Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development
Centro de Investigaciones sobre Desertificación-CIDE (CSIC, Universitat de València, Generalitat Valenciana)
Desert Research Institute, Division of Earth and Ecosystem Sciences

Further information on the *NATO - CCMS and Science Committee Workshop on Desertification in the Mediterranean Region* can be obtained from:

William Kepner - kepner.william@epa.gov, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, USA

Jose Rubio - jose.l.rubio@uv.es, University of Valencia, Spain

David Mouat - dmouat@dri.edu, Desert Research Institute, USA

Fausto Pedrazzini - f.pedrazzini@hq.nato.int, NATO Science Committee, Belgium

Deniz Beten - ccms@hq.nato.int NATO CCMS, Belgium